--20.(Amended)   A system according to Claim 10, character-
ised in that the system is arranged to calculate and print, on
the basis of the franking mark, a second message authentication
code and/or to print the franking mark in encoded form.--

--21.(Amended) A system according to Claim 10, character-
ised in that the system further comprises a second central
memory (40) for storing combinations of identification codes
and provided unique bit strings, central input means (44) for
inputting franking marks printed on documents, a third central
memory (42) for storing the combinations of identification
codes and unique bit strings present in the inputted franking
marks, and processor means (36), connected to the central
input means and the first, second, and third central memories,
for mutually comparing the data in the second and third
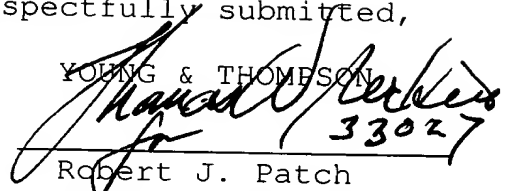central memories.--

REMARKS

Claims 4-5, 7-9, 13-15 and 19-21 have been amended to correct
multiple dependencies. Attached hereto is a marked-up version
of the changes made to the claims by the current amendments.
The amended page is captioned **"VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW
CHANGES MADE"**.

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Respectfully submitted,

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"VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE"

Claims 4-5, 7-9, 13-15 and 19-21 have been amended as follows:

4.(Amended)   A method according to ~~Claims~~Claim 2 ~~or 3~~, characterised in that after the reading of the information carrier (18) by the printing device (20), use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document is rendered impossible by the printing device (20).

5.(Amended)   A method according to Claim 2 ~~or 3~~, characterised in that, after reading the information carrier (18), it is checked whether the value of a counter on the information carrier (18) lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, the value of the counter is adjusted after reading and step c is executed, and, if this is not the case, step c is blocked.

7.(Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that the identification code comprises a user identification code and/or a printer identification code.

8.(Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that on the basis of the franking mark a second message authentication code is calculated and that this also is printed and/or the franking mark is printed in encoded form.

9.(Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that the set of unique bit strings is stored in a first central memory (38), used combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings are stored in a second central memory (40), franking marks printed on documents are read in, combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings which are present in the read-in franking marks are stored in a third central memory (42) and are compared to the used combinations in the second central memory.

13.(Amended)   A system according to Claim 11 ~~or 12~~, characterised in that the terminal (2) is arranged to store also, besides the unique bit string and the identification code, a terminal identification code, protected with the aid of the first message authentication code and/or protected by encoding, on the information carrier (18) with memory.

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14. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 11, ~~12 or 13,~~ characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to render use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document impossible.

15. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 11, ~~12 or 13,~~ characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to check whether the value of a counter on the information carrier (18) lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, to execute step c and to adjust the value of the counter after reading, and, if this is not the case, to block step c.

19. (Amended)   A system according to ~~any of the Claims~~Claim 10 ~~up to and including 18~~, characterised in that the identification code comprises a user identification code and/or printer identification code.

20. (Amended)   A system according to ~~any of~~Claim 10, characterised in that the system is arranged to calculate and print, on the basis of the franking mark, a second message authentication code and/or to print the franking mark in encoded form.

4. (Amended)   A method according to ~~Claims~~Claim 2 ~~or 3~~, characterised in that after the reading of the information carrier (18) by the printing device (20), use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document is rendered impossible by the printing device (20).

5. (Amended)   A method according to Claim 2 ~~or 3~~, characterised in that, after reading the information carrier (18), it is checked whether the value of a counter on the information carrier (18) lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, the value of the counter is adjusted after reading and step c is executed, and, if this is not the case, step c is blocked.

7. (Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that the identification code comprises a user identification code and/or a printer identification code.

8. (Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that on the basis of the franking mark a second message authentication code is calculated and that this also is printed and/or the franking mark is printed in encoded form.

9. (Amended)   A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~Claim 1, characterised in that the set of unique bit strings is stored in a first central memory (38), used combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings are stored in a second central memory (40), franking marks printed on documents are read in, combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings which are present in the read-in franking marks are stored in a third central memory (42) and are compared to the used combinations in the second central memory.

13. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 11 ~~or 12~~, characterised in that the terminal (2) is arranged to store also, besides the unique bit string and the identification code, a terminal identification code, protected with the aid of the first message authentication code and/or protected by encoding, on the information carrier (18) with memory.

14. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 11, ~~12 or 13,~~ characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to render use of the unique bit string for printing a further franking mark on a further document impossible.

15. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 11, ~~12 or 13,~~ characterised in that the printing device (20) is arranged, after reading the information carrier (18), to check whether the value of a counter on the information carrier (18) lies within predefined limits, and, if this is the case, to execute step c and to adjust the value of the counter after reading, and, if this is not the case, to block step c.

19. (Amended)   A system according to ~~any of the Claims~~Claim 10 ~~up to and including 18~~, characterised in that the identification code ·comprises a user identification code and/or printer identification code.

20. (Amended)   A system according to ~~any of~~Claim 10, characterised in that the system is arranged to calculate and print, on the basis of the franking mark, a second message authentication code and/or to print the franking mark in encoded form.

21. (Amended)   A system according to Claim 10, characterised in that the system further comprises a second central memory (40) for storing combinations of identification codes and provided unique bit strings, central input means (44) for

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inputting franking marks printed on documents, a third central memory (42) for ~~Claims~~storing the ~~up to~~combinations of identification codes and

unique bit strings present in the inputted franking marks, and processor means (36), connected to the central input means and the first, second, and third central memories, for mutually comparing the data in the second and third central memories.

21.(Amended) A system according to Claim 10, ~~one of the Claims 10 up to and including 20,~~ characterised in that the system further comprises a second central memory (40) for storing combinations of identification codes and provided unique bit strings, central input means (44) for inputting franking marks printed on documents, a third central memory (42) for storing the combinations of identification codes and unique bit strings present in the inputted franking marks, and processor means (36), connected to the central input means and the first, second, and third central memories, for mutually comparing the data in the second and third central memories.